

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF CODE ENFORCEMENT

*Shayla Lynch, 2nd District Councilmember
Social Services and Public Safety (SSPS) Committee
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LEXINGTON





Why Code Enforcement?

- Mayor's Racial Justice and Equality Report Recommendation #2:
Housing & Gentrification
 - Changes must be implemented in the Division of Code Enforcement. Our recommendation is the Housing Code of the City of Lexington be reimaged into a Code Agency that places the health, well-being, and protection of residents (especially the most vulnerable) and neighborhoods as its mission.





Progress to Date

- Jun 2023: Item referred to Social Services & Public Safety (SSPS) Committee
- Nov 2023 – Jan 2024: Community Engagement: Town Halls and Online Survey
- Feb 2024 – Jan 2025: Research/work with staff
- Feb 2025: Presentation to SSPS by former Councilwoman Gray and Director Lee Steele
 - Clarifications added to Section 12-55 to address tenants' rights for reporting code violations
 - Graffiti added to the list of nuisances to Sec. 12-2(c)
 - Review of 2024 Annual Achievements

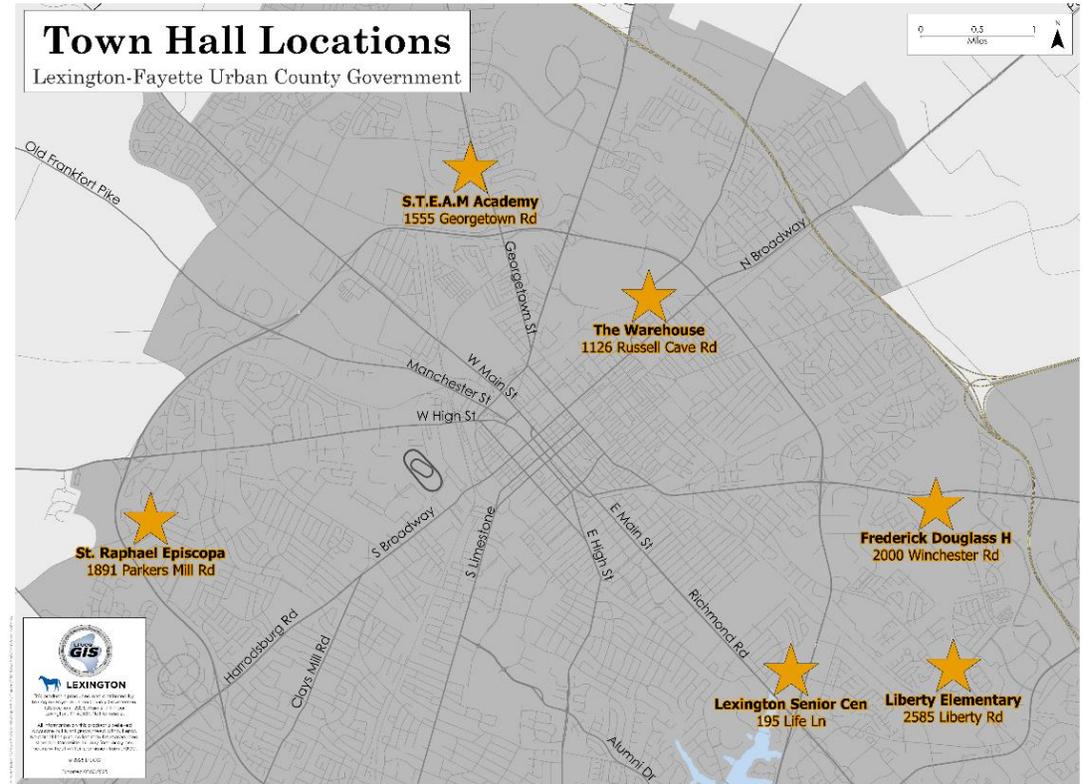




Town Hall Locations

- The Warehouse
- St. Raphael Episcopal Church
- Liberty Elementary
- S.T.E.A.M Academy
- Lexington Senior Center
- Frederick Douglass High

**In addition to in-person feedback, an online survey gathered general feedback*





Condemnations

- Problem
 - *Concern with whether condemnations are handled in an equitable manner*
- Research and Review Process
 - Ride-Along with CE staff
 - Meetings with Director and CE team to understand the condemnation process from start to end
- Conclusions
 - Most commonly found in multi-unit housing
 - Process prompts city services for residents, once property is condemned – i.e., Housing Advocate and Relocation assistance
- Recommendations
 - None at this time





Administrative Hearing Board

- Problems
 - *Difficult to recruit board members*
 - *Board members have been singular*
 - *Lack of training and consistent board meeting attendance*
 - *Public generally felt intimidation at hearings*
- Research and Review Process
 - Attended multiple hearings
 - Benchmarked other cities' code enforcement hearing processes and requirements
 - Louisville, Portland, New York
 - Meetings with Director and Code Enforcement team to understand the purpose and function of the Board





Administrative Hearing Board (cont.)

- Conclusions
 - Hearing/Appeals Board could benefit from administrative changes to help mitigate challenges
- Recommendations
 1. Develop a targeted recruitment strategy for the Administrative Hearing Board:
 - i. Emphasize that applicants' requirements include *more than* legal experience and ensure the published website clearly reflects such
 - ii. Recruit hearing officers from various professions to ensure adequate representation across demographics, experience, etc.
 2. Create a database of hearing officers to allow for depth in availability for hearings, as needed.
 3. Develop an annual required training for Board members and hearing officers that includes CE process, mediation procedures, cultural competence, etc.





Administrative Hearing Board (cont.)

- Problem
 - *Hearing/Appeals process is intimidating and not user-friendly*
- Recommendations
 - Update physical space and minimize staffing for hearings (*already implemented by CE team*)
 - Offer pre-hearing consultations to discuss case with CE officer or other experienced staff before the formal hearing (*already implemented by CE team*)
 - Develop an online case management tool for property owners and residents to file appeals, track status, and submit evidence





Naturalized Spaces

- Problem
 - *Neighbors don't agree with fines for naturalized spaces*
 - *Neighbors aren't clear on how to identify/designate a naturalized space vs a yard needing mowing*
 - *Neighbors generally feel like a special ordinance is needed to regulate these.*
- Research and Review Process
 - Meetings with Director and Code Enforcement team to understand
 - Meetings with members of the Greenspace Trust
- Conclusions
 - Controversial issue
 - Complex issue – CE staff needs additional technical expertise
- Recommendations
 - None at this time





Equitable Enforcement

- Town Hall feedback largely centered around fairness and equity in enforcement. Some examples:
 - *Are certain districts targeted for complaints and citations?*
 - *Are officers “assigned” to certain territories/districts?*
 - *Could we work toward consistency with these assignments to build rapport and trust with residents?*
 - *Do we have sufficient officers for the size of our city?*
- Currently working with CE team to review data around citations to identify patterns, outliers, etc.
 - Anonymous vs non-Anonymous complaints
 - Distribution among zip codes, districts, type of complaints, etc.



Questions?



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